

Research & Issues in Music Education

Volume 5 | Number 1

Article 3

2007

The Effect of Band Director Leadership Style and Student Leadership Ability on Band Festival Ratings

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Recommended Citation

Davison, P. Dru (2007) "The Effect of Band Director Leadership Style and Student Leadership Ability on Band Festival Ratings," *Research & Issues in Music Education*: Vol. 5 : No. 1 , Article 3.
Available at: <http://ir.stthomas.edu/rime/vol5/iss1/3>

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between band director leadership styles and the strength of student leadership within the bands. This study also examined the differences between leadership styles, student leadership strength, and band festival ratings (marching and concert). Subjects ($N = 42$) were band directors from Texas and Arkansas who participated in marching and concert band festivals. The Leadership Measurement Instrument (LMI) was designed to ascertain the strength of student leadership within the band programs, the type of leadership practiced by the directors (autocratic/facilitative), and the marching and concert festival band scores attained by the participants of this study. The data indicated a statistically significant positive relationship ($p = .01$) for student leadership strength and director leadership style, meaning that band directors with greater facilitative leadership tended to have a greater amount of student leadership within their programs. No statistically significant differences were found for student and director leadership on marching band festival scores. However, data concerning concert band festival ratings revealed significant differences for student leadership strength for concert band festival ratings, favoring high levels of student leadership ($p = .018$). The data also revealed significant differences for director leadership style, favoring facilitative leaders ($p = .004$).

Introduction

The manner by which decisions are made and changes are implemented within a musical organization may reflect leadership style. Within a band program, a director's decision-making style can range from making decisions without any input from the students to setting parameters by which students have more decision-making opportunities. A continuum of student leadership strength also exists within many music ensembles. Students can display leadership in a number of ways, whether as social leaders, musical leaders, or both. Some student leaders attain a formal position of student officer or section leader, while other students display leadership behaviors without being elected to a formal position. Intuitively, band directors may recognize some of the benefits of having strong student leaders, yet little is known about the effect of student leadership on musical outcomes. If band directors do recognize the importance of having strong leadership within their band programs, then it may also be important to consider what kind of director leadership style is related to student leadership development. It may be equally important to investigate the effect of band director leadership style on musical performance outcomes.

Little is known about student leadership and band director leadership in relation to performance outcomes. The available research can be grouped into categories of leadership style and organizational success (Dunaway, 1987; Goodstein, 1987), investigations into the inherent nature of leadership behaviors (Palen & Palen, 1995; Roberson, 1985), and leadership development (Burnsed & Jensen, 1994; Palen & Palen, 1995; Rudatis, 1996). Dunaway (1987) noted that directors of successful choral programs tended to rely on student leaders more than directors of average programs. Goodstein (1987), however, found no significant relationship between differing leadership styles and band director success, yet recommended further study of band director leadership behaviors.

Researchers differ in their views about ways in which band directors and students acquire leadership abilities. Roberson (1985) noted that there have been theories that explain leadership behaviors as being inborn, yet others (Palen & Palen, 1995) contended that leadership behaviors may be learned. Burnsed and Jensen (1994) speculated that in order for music students to become effective leaders, music educators must be leaders themselves. Rudaitis (1996) noted the relationship between the leader of a music organization and the leadership qualities of the students: “[The advisor] must model the leadership skills that students are expected to develop” (p. 40). Concerning the development of student leadership, Rudaitis stressed the importance of turning responsibility over to students. Research has found, however, no significant differences between traditional music instruction and instruction designed to facilitate student participation in musical decision making regarding the students’ ability to perform expressively (Petters, 1976).

Regarding leadership styles, an artificial dichotomy has emerged from the research. In the autocratic style, the head of a musical organization will often view his or her leadership style as the authoritative head of a hierarchy, complete with subordinates to carry out the assigned tasks necessary to meet the goals and standards set by the leader. This style of leadership was popularized by business models of the industrial revolution and continues to be effective for some organizations (Lashwell, 1995). Glickman, Gordon, and Gordon (2001) suggested that the autocratic style is best used when the subordinate group is functioning at low levels.

Conversely, Lashwell (1995) described facilitative leaders as those who enhance the leadership qualities and opportunities of their subordinates. Palen and Palen (1997) offered a musical example of this concept when they stated that “...musical leadership is best thought of as creating a context wherein others are empowered to act freely and responsibly, rather than imposing top-down control” (p. 31). Glickman, et al. (2001) suggested that facilitative leadership is best used when the subordinates of a group function at a high level.

Purposes

One purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between band director’s reported leadership style and the reported strength of student leadership within the band programs. Another purpose was to examine the differences between the reported leadership styles (autocratic/facilitative) on band festival ratings (marching and concert). A final purpose was to examine the differences between the reported student leadership strength on band festival ratings (marching and concert).

The research questions for this study were:

Will there be a significant relationship between the reported director leadership styles and the reported strength of student leadership within the band programs?

Will there be significant differences between the reported director leadership styles or reported strength of student leadership on marching festival ratings?

Will there be significant differences between the reported director leadership styles or reported strength of student leadership on concert festival ratings?

Method

Participants (N = 42) consisted of band directors from Region II of the Texas Music Educators Association as well as directors from Regions V, VIII, and IX of the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association. The Texas band directors were asked to fill out the LMI at a regional meeting, while the Arkansas directors were asked to fill out the LMI at a state music conference. The participants in this study taught at schools of varying sizes, including nine 5-A schools, four 4-A schools, nineteen 3-A schools, six 2-A schools, and four 1-A schools.

The band directors' leadership style (facilitative or autocratic), as well as the strength of student leadership within the band programs served as independent variables for this study. Dependent variables for this study were region marching and concert band festival ratings. Festival ratings served as objective evaluations of the bands' performances at a given time, not indications of the band programs' overall success.

The Leadership Measurement Instrument (LMI) was designed to address student leadership strength and director leadership style. The total number of items on the LMI, including student leadership, director leadership, and ratings items, was 24. For student leadership, the LMI gauged areas of leadership continuity, leadership representation between age levels, leadership attitudes, and both musical and social leadership success through formal and informal processes. Under the sub-group of student leadership, the LMI contained 15 questions using a five point Likert-scale. These questions were scored and summed to produce student leadership scores with a range of 35 to 67 and a mean of 50.

Regarding director leadership style, the LMI was designed to ascertain whether the band directors demonstrated leadership characteristics that were autocratic or facilitative. Under the sub-group of student leadership, the LMI contained five questions using a four point Likert-scale. These question asked directors how often they give students the opportunity to make musical and non-musical decisions that affect the groups, how much they rely on students to complete musical and non-musical tasks without the assistance or interference from school officials. The LMI also asked directors to choose which leadership style/decision making style most closely resembled their own. Director style choices included "teacher permits students to function independently within limits defined by the superior," "teacher presents problems, gets suggestions, and makes decision," "teacher presents ideas and invites questions," and "teacher makes and announces decision." These questions were scored and summed to produce director leadership style scores with a range of 11 to 19 and a mean of 14. For statistical purposes, participants scoring at or below the mean (n = 19) were deemed autocratic, while participants scoring above the mean (n = 23) were considered facilitative.

The LMI also contained four questions that asked about the size of the school districts and the festival ratings the bands received during the 2003-2004 academic calendar year. Both Arkansas and Texas use similar ratings procedures, with three adjudicators scoring the bands on a scale of one to five, one being the most desirable. Due to pragmatic concerns, such as the number of regions involved, inter-rater reliabilities were not computed. Each participant's band festival ratings were negatively scored and summed to produce a possible range of 3 to 15. The participants reported marching band festival ratings with an actual range of 8 to 15 with a mean of 13.48 and concert band festival scores with an actual range of 9 to 15 with a mean of 13.55.

To check for content validity, a panel of four experts reviewed the LMI to ensure its appropriateness for measurement. Each expert was asked to review the document for clarity, however specific tasks were asked of each, according to his or her area of expertise, including research methodology, leadership behaviors, and instrumental music.

Several revisions were made based upon the recommendations of the experts. A five point Likert-scale (SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree) was initially used for the student leadership portion of the LMI, but revisions were made to keep many of the questions from being answered dichotomously. The questions that would be potentially answered dichotomously (n=10) were reworded in such a way that answering with percentages (1-20%, 21-40%, 41-60%, 61-80%, 81-100%) would be more appropriate. One other change included an addition of defined leadership terms at the beginning of the LMI.

The revised document contained 20 items pertaining to student leadership and was then field-tested by a group of eight graduate music education students from varied areas of specialization. The field test group was asked to check the LMI for flow, semantics, and clarity. This sample also served as a pre-pilot test group because they actually answered the questions to produce data which were used as a first estimate of internal consistency.

The initial reliability analysis produced an estimated alpha of .87. After the five lowest loading questions were removed, another reliability analysis resulted in an estimated alpha of .9. This was deemed an acceptable level of internal consistency, and the resultant LMI draft was ready for a complete pilot test. A group of Arkansas band directors (n = 14) served as a pilot testing group. The analysis of the band director pilot group produced an additional estimated reliability of .87 for the revised 15 question student leadership portion of the LMI. Director leadership items (n = 5) and ratings items (n = 4) were added to the LMI after they were checked for content validity by experts in leadership behaviors and research methodology.

Results

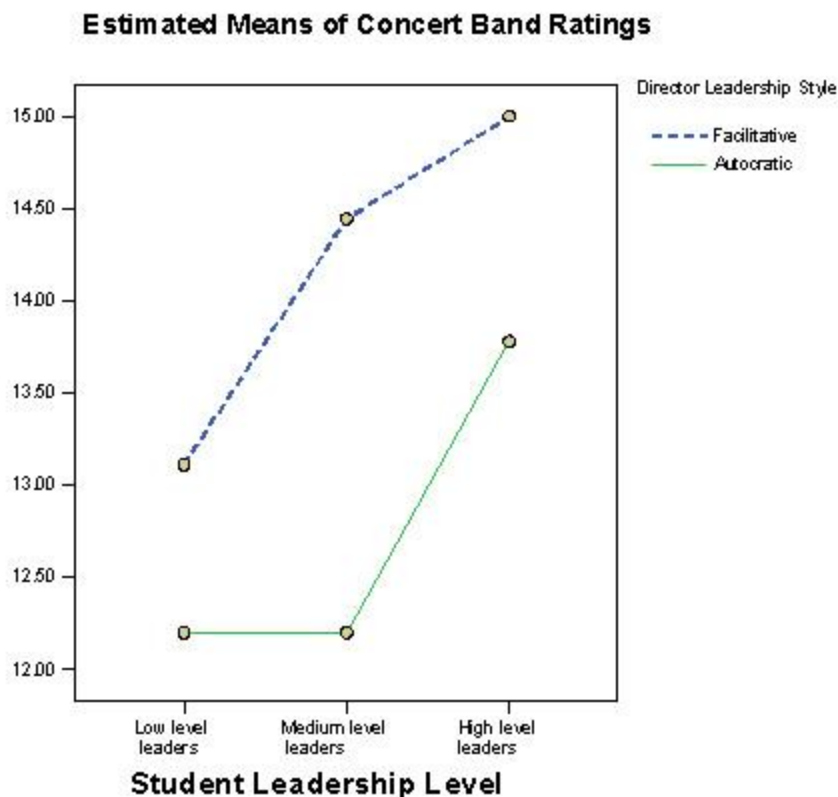
The first research question investigated the relationship between director leadership styles and the strength of student leadership. Due to the intervallic nature of the scores, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the selected

variables. The two-tailed correlation between student leadership strength and director leadership style produced a statistically significant positive relationship ($r = .39$; $p = .01$). A scatterplot revealed that band directors who reported greater facilitative leadership tendencies also reported stronger student leadership tendencies within their programs.

The second research question investigated whether there were significant differences between director leadership styles and student leadership strength on marching band festival ratings. Descriptive statistics revealed that the skewness, kurtosis, and homogeneity of variance assumptions were considered to be within an acceptable range for running an analysis of variance. Student leadership scores were coded equally into three groups (low, medium, and high) while leadership style scores were coded into two groups (facilitative and autocratic). A two-way ANOVA, using marching band festival scores as the dependent variable, revealed no significant main effects for director leadership style: $F(1, 36) = .39$, $p = .54$, or student leadership: $F(2, 36) = 1.72$, $p = .19$. Additionally, there was no significant interaction between director leadership style and student leadership: $F(2, 36) = 2.22$, $p = .12$.

The third research question concerned possible differences between director leadership styles and student leadership strength on concert band festival ratings. A two-way ANOVA, using concert band festival scores as the dependent variable, revealed there was a significant main effect for student leadership strength: $F(2, 36) = 4.52$, $p = .018$. A nonpairwise multiple comparison with Bonferroni adjustment was calculated to find a significant difference between band programs with a low level of student leadership and programs with a high level of student leadership, favoring a high level of student leadership ($p = .04$). There was also a significant main effect for director leadership style: $F(1, 36) = 9.46$, $p = .004$ favoring facilitative leadership ($p = .004$). For the dependent variable of concert band festival ratings, ANOVA results revealed no significant interaction between the variables of student leadership strength and director leadership style: $F(2, 36) = 1.56$, $p = .49$.

Regarding concert band festival ratings, a univariate profile plot revealed that bands with low, medium, and high levels of student leadership achieved significantly higher if the band director's leadership style was facilitative (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Discussion

Band directors may recognize, at least intuitively, the value of having students with strong musical and social leadership qualities. Student leaders may have the ability to influence peer attitudes, model musical concepts, and affect the social climate of an organization. For this sample, band directors with greater facilitative leadership characteristics tended to have stronger student leadership within their programs. Band directors hoping to raise the strength of student leadership within their band programs may consider occasions where it would be appropriate to let students make decisions that affect musical and non-musical aspects of the organization.

According to conditions outlined by Glickman et al. (2001), situations suitable for facilitative leadership would be when the group is functioning at moderate to high developmental levels. Conversely, it may be difficult to incorporate facilitative leadership fully if directors have little confidence in the students' functional capabilities. A rush into shared decision making may become a laborious process that may have adverse effects on the overall group. This process should not be abandoned just because the students are functioning at low levels. Rather, the process should just be incorporated slowly. Slow leadership development for low ability students may be better than no development at all.

Another situation suitable for facilitative leadership is when the band members are committed to solving a problem but the problem does not matter to the director. It may seem that such decisions have a tremendous importance to several members, yet the director can predict that the outcome will have little impact on the musical organization as a whole. With problems of minimal consequence, allowing students to generate and execute problem solving strategies may be meaningful steps toward leadership development.

These are good opportunities to entertain a shared belief that the decision outcomes are important, and that the decisions students are allowed to make concerning the situation will have a meaningful impact. If the students perceive the teacher's attitude as *laissez faire*, there is a good possibility the students will also place little value on the decision outcome, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the leadership opportunity.

Results of this study indicated there were no statistically significant differences between student leadership strengths or leadership styles for marching band ratings, yet there were statistically significant differences for concert band festival ratings. For concert band, directors displaying facilitative leadership tended to lead bands that were rated significantly higher at festival. Similarly, band programs with a high degree of student leadership also tended to be rated significantly higher than those with low levels of student leadership. The findings of this study align partially with Glickman et al. (2001), who suggested using facilitative leadership when subordinates function at a high level of development. While this was found for concert band, it was not found for marching band. Robertson (1985) noted, "No one single theory or model will satisfy every motivational need or situation" (p. 46). As for the differences between marching band and concert band, more research is needed to investigate the role of director and student leadership qualities. However, results of this study may suggest that directors use different leadership approaches for different ensembles. It is possible that the nature of marching band necessitates a more autocratic style of leadership that limits various aspects of student leadership.

Future researchers should consider studying leadership qualities from the perspective of the students as well as the band directors. Additionally, researchers should consider comparing director leadership styles and student leadership strength with measures of program success other than festival ratings. Although this study focused on the social dynamics between band directors and band students, leadership research should be expanded to include other music organizations and ensembles. While this study should be replicated with a larger sample size, it provides preliminary findings in relation to band director leadership styles and the strength of student leadership, both social and musical.

Leadership Assessment Instrument

Definitions of terms:

Student Leadership- The collective grouping of the following leadership categories:

Formal Social Leaders- Students appointed to non-musical leadership positions such as band councils or committees.

Informal Social Leaders- Students who possess natural leadership qualities yet have no official duties to the organization.

Formal Musical Leaders- Students such as section leaders or drum majors whose duties involve making musical decisions.

Informal Musical Leaders- Students whose musicianship skills positively affect the performance of others.

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

N = neither Agree nor Disagree

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

1. I feel band members within my organization chosen for formal musical leadership positions satisfactorily perform their duties.

SD D N A SA

2. I feel band members within my organization elected to formal social leadership positions satisfactorily perform their duties.

SD D N A SA

3. There is much less overall student leadership within my musical organization this year than in years past.

SD D N A SA

4. Overall, my band members consistently exhibit positive attitudes.

SD D N A SA

5. Band members take pride in publicly representing the organization.

SD D N A SA

6. The overall spirit of my group is positively influenced by the positive attitudes displayed by student leaders.

SD D N A SA

7. Band members who are considered student leaders sometimes are not reliable.

SD D N A SA

8. Band members generally encourage one another to raise performance standards.

SD D N A SA

9. The percentage of members within my organization who exhibit musical leadership although they are not assigned formal musical leadership positions could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

10. The percentage of members within my organization who assert social leadership through informal means could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

1. The percentage of my group's younger members who satisfactorily exhibit student leadership qualities could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

2. The percentage of members within my ensemble who exhibit a high level of musicianship skills could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

3. The percentage of my group's older members who satisfactorily exhibit student leadership qualities could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

4. The percentage of band members who consistently organize activities that facilitate a strengthening of my group's social bond could be best described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

5. The percentage of my older band members who consistently model exemplary musicianship qualities to the less experienced musicians could best be described as:

1-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

6. What is the size of your school district?

1A 2A 3A 4A 5A

7. Please specify your ensemble's ratings for the 2003-2004 Region Marching Festival.

I II III IV V (Judge One)
I II III IV V (Judge Two)
I II III IV V (Judge Three)

8. Please specify your ensemble's ratings for the 2003-2004 Region Concert Band Festival.

I II III IV V (Judge One)
I II III IV V (Judge Two)
I II III IV V (Judge Three)

9. Please specify your ensemble's composite rating for the 2003-2004 Region Concert Band Sight-Reading.

I II III IV V (Sight-Reading)

10. How often are students given the opportunity to make interpretive musical decisions that affect the ensemble's performance?

Never Seldom Sometimes Often

11. How often are students given the opportunity to implement decisions that affect non-musical outcomes for the group?

Never Seldom Sometimes Often

12. How confident do you feel depending on students to complete important musical tasks without assistance or interference from school officials?

Not at all Confident Not very Confident Somewhat Confident Completely Confident

13. How confident do you feel depending on students to complete important non-musical tasks without assistance or interference from school officials?

Not Confident Not very Confident Somewhat Confident Completely Confident

14. Circle the leadership style/decision making style that most closely resembles your own.

Teacher permits students to function independently within limits defined by the superior	Teacher presents problems, gets suggestions, and makes decision	Teacher presents ideas and invites questions	Teacher makes and announces decision
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Dr. Davison's teaching experiences range from Gordon-based early childhood programs and Suzuki-based string programs to public school instrumental music programs, college jazz bands, and senior adult music programs. Also, he has presented at numerous state and national conferences and is an active performer and clinician.

Dr. Davison's research interests and presentations include: music teacher retention;

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